

Joseph Starbuck House
4 New Dollar Lane
Nantucket
Nantucket County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-940

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

JOSEPH STARBUCK HOUSE

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Location: 4 New Dollar Lane, (at one time called Risdale Street), (on east side of street), Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Lucy Allen Fowlkes (Mrs. J. Winston Fowlkes)

Present Occupant: Fowlkes family

Present Use: Seasonal occupancy

Brief Statement of Significance: This is a typical Nantucket mansion of the early nineteenth century when the houses began to be more spacious.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1807 -- Joseph Starbuck, Simeon Starbuck and Levi Starbuck bought land on New Dollar Lane from Samuel Macy, "equally share and share alike."
- 1808 -- Joseph Starbuck bought from Samuel Coleman for \$500 another piece of land "near where the said Joseph Starbuck & Co. have lately built their spermaceti candle manufactory." Joseph Starbuck died in March, 1861.
- 1861 -- Phebe Ann Barnard bought property from heirs of Joseph Starbuck in May, 1861.
- 1880 -- William C. Marden purchased house and land from heirs of Phebe Ann Barnard, who were her sisters, Mary Chase, widow, and Eliza Ann McCleave. Price \$350.
- 1888 -- Etta C. (Marden) Wood bought from the other heirs of William C. Marden, namely, Mary B. Marden, Willard B. Marden and Wallace C. Marden.
- 1915 -- Alfred Dawson
- 1920 -- Bertha J. Hendricks
- 1925 -- Eleanor B. Husband

1926 -- Joseph Husband

1927 -- Property was Land Courted by Mr. Husband

1934 -- Thomas B. Husband

1938 -- John Winston Fowlkes

1962 -- to date -- Lucy Allen Fowlkes
(Abstract, Records at Registry of Deeds,
Nantucket, Massachusetts)

2. Date of erection: Joseph Starbuck built his home soon after he purchased the land adjacent to his candle factory -- about 1809.
3. Architect: None. According to Dr. Will Gardner in "Three Bricks and Three Brothers," Joseph Starbuck decided to build a house that would be different from any house in town.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The house was of a different style from the earlier lean-to houses built around a central chimney. When Joseph Starbuck married Sally Gardner he was disowned by the Quaker meeting and therefore felt he could build a more elaborate house without criticism.

The house is large, has a clapboard front, with the side and rear elevations shingled. The main house has two chimneys, and the main entrance is of excellent design, with wide front stoop, and the door opens directly into the main hallway which extends all the way to the rear. There are rooms off either side of the downstairs and upstairs hall, all of the original eight rooms having their own fireplaces. There are the usual wide floor boards, paneled walls and ceiling beams.

An almost complete lack of decorative detail is noticeable on the exterior.

The house was raised from the ground five feet, and in place of the usual circular cellar there was a high basement with a fireplace which could be used for cooking when desired. A wide door opened to the fields, the try-works, the sheds and candle-house which stood near the house between the homestead and Pleasant Street.

Starbuck's Court originally ran from Pleasant Street to New Dollar Lane close to this property, but the western end was closed in 1845.

5. Notes on alterations and additions: A new wing, designed by Walter D. Blair, architect, was added to the house when Dr. Fowlkes purchased it in 1938. This extends to the

south and is in keeping with the style of the main house, which has been kept remarkably unchanged and in excellent condition. (Abstracts from Three Bricks and Three Brothers -- Gardner, -- and from A Mirror of Nantucket -- Fowlkes)

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: In early life a butcher, Joseph Starbuck developed into a whaling merchant of unusual success. When he built his own new home his friends declared he "would never see a new dollar for an old one" because of his lavish plans -- hence the name of the street, New Dollar Lane. However, he continued to prosper, buying more whaleships and building try-works, sheds and a candle-house near his home, and in 1852 was listed in Richest Men of Massachusetts as being worth \$150,000, far more than any other Nantucket man at that time.

Joseph Starbuck owned many whaleships, but his pride was the ship he had built at Nantucket at the Brant Point shipyard and marine railway. She was an elegant ship of over 400 tons intended for the whaling service and named for her owner, Joseph Starbuck. Only a few vessels were completed at Brant Point and her launching was a big event, with a large crowd at hand. This occurred in October, 1838, and after being outfitted she made one successful three year voyage, returning April 3, 1842, with 3321 barrels of oil. When ready for her second voyage, as she was to take on supplies at Edgartown, the three hours' sail to Martha's Vineyard was planned as a kind of holiday "cruise," and six women, friends and relatives of the crew, and several men made up the party in addition to the crew, the guests planning to return from Edgartown when the ship sailed for the long three-year cruise. The Joseph Starbuck left Nantucket wharf Sunday morning, November 27, 1842, in tow of Steamboat Telegraph. Soon after crossing the bar a violent gale forced the steamer to return and the whaleship to anchor. During the night her cables parted and the helpless craft was driven onto Nantucket bar. By remarkable seamanship, the steamer Massachusetts put out to her the next morning and a boat manned by volunteers managed to rescue those aboard. The ship eventually went to pieces, nothing of any material value being saved. The vessel alone was insured for \$24,000. (Abstract, Records in Whaling Museum of Nantucket Historical Association, and from Wrecks Around Nantucket, Arthur H. Gardner, where a complete account of the wreck of the Joseph Starbuck may be found.)

- C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: old photograph in Brief Historical Data and memories of my boyhood days in Nantucket by Joseph Ellis Coffee Farnham, 1915; photograph in A Mirror of Nantucket by George Allen Fowlkes, 1959; sketch of

doorway in Nantucket Sketchbook by Edwin Eberman,
Nantucket, Stanley F. Baker, 1946.

2. Bibliography:

Gardner, William Edward. Three bricks and three brothers;
the story of the Nantucket whale-oil merchant, Joseph
Starbuck. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1945. illus.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin
Nantucket, Massachusetts
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PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. They are part of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, July 1971.